Hello, class of 2016. We have successfully made it through! I want to congratulate you in being here today. I am proud to be standing in front of you. With determination, and hard work we have come to this point to celebrate our achievements. When I think about who I was when I came to Summer Bridge in August 2014, I feel that I have grown so much thanks to Guttman.

I have learned 3 important life lessons from my Guttman experience. The first lesson is to always be prepared to take on new challenges. I am not a public speaker, in fact I barely talk in class. I’m sure that everyone who was in the same class as me would agree. I clearly remember my first presentation in Summer Bridge. I stood in front of the class and not one word came out of my mouth. That was one of the most embarrassing moments in my life, (pause) but I’m glad it happened. It taught me that I should never miss an opportunity to present. Even though I might embarrass myself, I still improved a little bit every time I made a presentation. In effect, I learned how to perform even though I was afraid. I learned not to be discouraged by my insecurities. What makes a person successful is not being perfect, but understanding yourself. Therefore, know your strengths and weaknesses. For me, I knew I lacked communication and interpersonal skills, so I worked to improve them. Knowing I was weak in that area, I tried to be an overachiever in everything else. Having a strong sense of self led me to be in front of you today.

The second lesson I have learned is to be more open-minded. I’m sure many of you are just like me who like to work independently. I used to believe I could conquer the world alone. However, being in a teamwork-heavy environment like Guttman taught me the importance of working with others. We all have something different and unique to offer. I am now more open-minded to different ideas and cultures. I know that 5+5 equals 10, and I also appreciate that 9+1, 8+2, 7+3, and 6+4 also equals 10. We all came from completely different backgrounds, and yet we are here celebrating the same achievement.

The third lesson I have learned is the importance of keeping and making connections. When I started at Guttman, I was nowhere near as hard working or determined as I am today. Luckily for me, my family and friends were very supportive of me. Now excuse me while I tell my parents how much I appreciate them in Chinese. 爸爸妈妈 我知道你辛苦了谢谢你们一直以来的支持 我爱你们. Even though I was busy at Guttman, I made sure to keep my ties with my family and friends outside of Guttman deep. But my years at Guttman also gave me the opportunity to make connections with people I never would have met. Special thanks to Maximelle Rayes and Fatoumata Diallo for putting up with me throughout these years.

The connections I made with my professors have been inspiring, and I am deeply grateful to them all. One of them deserves special mention-----Professor Paul Naish, who sadly passed away this year. He was one of my first professors, and he will always be one of my favorite professors.

My deep appreciation and connection with Professor Saint-Louis underscores the three lessons I learned at Guttman. I met her during Summer Bridge and she was my teacher for many courses. She has taught me so much about my field of study. But she has also taught me about making
connections and being open-minded, and---for this occasion----not being afraid to speak in public.

Now to conclude, let me say to my classmates and fellow graduates, I hope you also think about the lessons you have learned at Guttman. Maybe you can connect with the three I have outlined here. I thank you all, and I hope you have success in whatever you pursue. I care about you and wish you the best of luck. Thank you.